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Coronavirus vaccine 'not a certainty' says infectious diseases expert

Everyone is holding out for a vaccine for coronavirus, but we may never get one warns an infectious diseases expert.

**Benedict Brook**[@BenedictBrook](#)

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While a global race underway to develop a human ready vaccine for the Covid-19 continues, there are several things that will determine how and when it could be developed.

Governments around the world have pinned their hopes of a vaccine for COVID-19 as being the end game in putting the virus to bed.

But an infectious diseases expert has said it's very possible a vaccine will never be found.

Talking to Karl Stefanovic and Allison Langdon on Channel 9's *Today* show this morning, the University of Sydney's David Isaacs said a vaccine wasn't found for SARS or MERS – two previous coronavirus outbreaks.

"I think we are all hoping for a vaccine," he said.

"People will certainly be developing vaccines, but they have to be tried out as well and see if they work. They have to be effective and that's not an easy task.

"We haven't had a vaccine, an effective one, against a coronavirus before. The SARS outbreak in 2003, people were developing a vaccine, but it never got tried because SARS disappeared.

Around the world, attempts are being made to make a COVID-19 vaccine. *Source:AFP*

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some other form including that the virus simply burned itself out.

“Waiting for a vaccine is a hope but not a certainty. If we don't get a vaccine, we have got other alternatives.

“We found drugs for HIV; we never found a vaccine. We have controlled HIV pretty well in the world using antiviral drugs.

“At the moment we haven't got antiviral drugs (for COVID-19), they are being tested and we may get those, but in the meanwhile it's public health measures that are the major weapon in our armoury.”

Hand washing, social distancing and supporting one another were effective methods of getting a handle on coronavirus and he added that “we are doing very well in Australia” because of those measures.

The University of Sydney's David Isaacs has warned a vaccine may never be found. *Source: News Corp Australia*

However, Dr Isaacs warned that a vaccine may itself cause unhelpful side effects due to the way some people's immune systems reacted to the virus.

He cited [UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's hospitalisation](#) today (Australia time) after contracting coronavirus and yet still suffering from symptoms more than a week later.

“That may be because his immune response has kicked in and it is actually doing him some harm. His immune response to the vaccine is part of the problem almost, and that's why some younger people are getting sick.”

This is called a cytokine release where the immune system, particularly in healthy people, can go into overdrive and begin damaging the body rather than helping it recover.

“So, when you are developing a vaccine you might conceivably actually cause problems to some people. It is something that we will have to test very carefully.”

It was for that reason, Dr Isaacs said, that young people needed to be wary of coronavirus. Because while most will recover, some could react extremely badly to the virus entering their system.



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